THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR) : (a) to (c) No proposal is presently under consideration for concluding any general Defence Cooperation agreement with Israel. Only exploratory discussions have so far taken place regarding Defence equipments and technologies; no concrete results have materialised as yet.

Pak Firing across Jammu and Kashmir Border

1008. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA:
SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of times on which unprovked firing was resorted to by Pakistan on Jammu and Kashmir border from August to date;

(b) the number of casualties suffered as a result thereof;

(c) what action has been taken to check these firings;

(d) whether it is a fact that a large number of families had to be shifted from border areas due to these firings, if so the details in this regard in respect of Poonch, and Rajouri and the other sectors; and

(e) what are the details of plan drawn to provide relief and rehabilitation to these affected families ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR) : (a) and (b) There have been incidents of exchange of fire between Indian and Pakistani forces across the Line of Control resulting in some casualties on both the sides. It would not be desirable to disclose further details.

(c) With a view to reducing tension and preventing escalation, the Directors General of Military Operations of India and Pakistan maintain weekly telephonic contact with each other. Meetings of Sector Commanders also take place, as and when required, with a view to resolving issues with potential of causing tension.

(d) and (e) The information is being obtained and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Shortage of Manpower in Defence Services

1009. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN :
SHRI SUKOMAL SEN :
SHRI RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI :
SHRI KAMAL MORARKA :
SHRI J. S. RAJU :
SHRI V. GOPALSAMY :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is shortage of manpower in defence services;

(b) if so, the reasons for such situation; and

(c) what steps are being contemplated to improve the situation ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR) : (a) to (c) There are certain shortages in certain ranks in the Defence Services. A variety of factors are responsible for the deficiencies, including, *inter alia*, the availability of attractive alternative opportunities to the eligible youth. Remedial measures are an ongoing process and include special entry schemes, enhanced induction of permanent commissioned officers, short service commission, induction of women, etc.

Reservation for Backward classes in Army Recruitment

1010. SHRI TINDIVANAM G. VENKATARAMAN : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any reservation for backward and most backward classes in the selection of men in army in its various departments including recruitment for field work in army; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR) : (a) and (b) Selection to all ranks in the Armed forces is open to all eligible Indian nationals, irrespective of class, caste, creed, community and religion. As such, there is no reservation quota in favour of any caste, tribe, class or community.